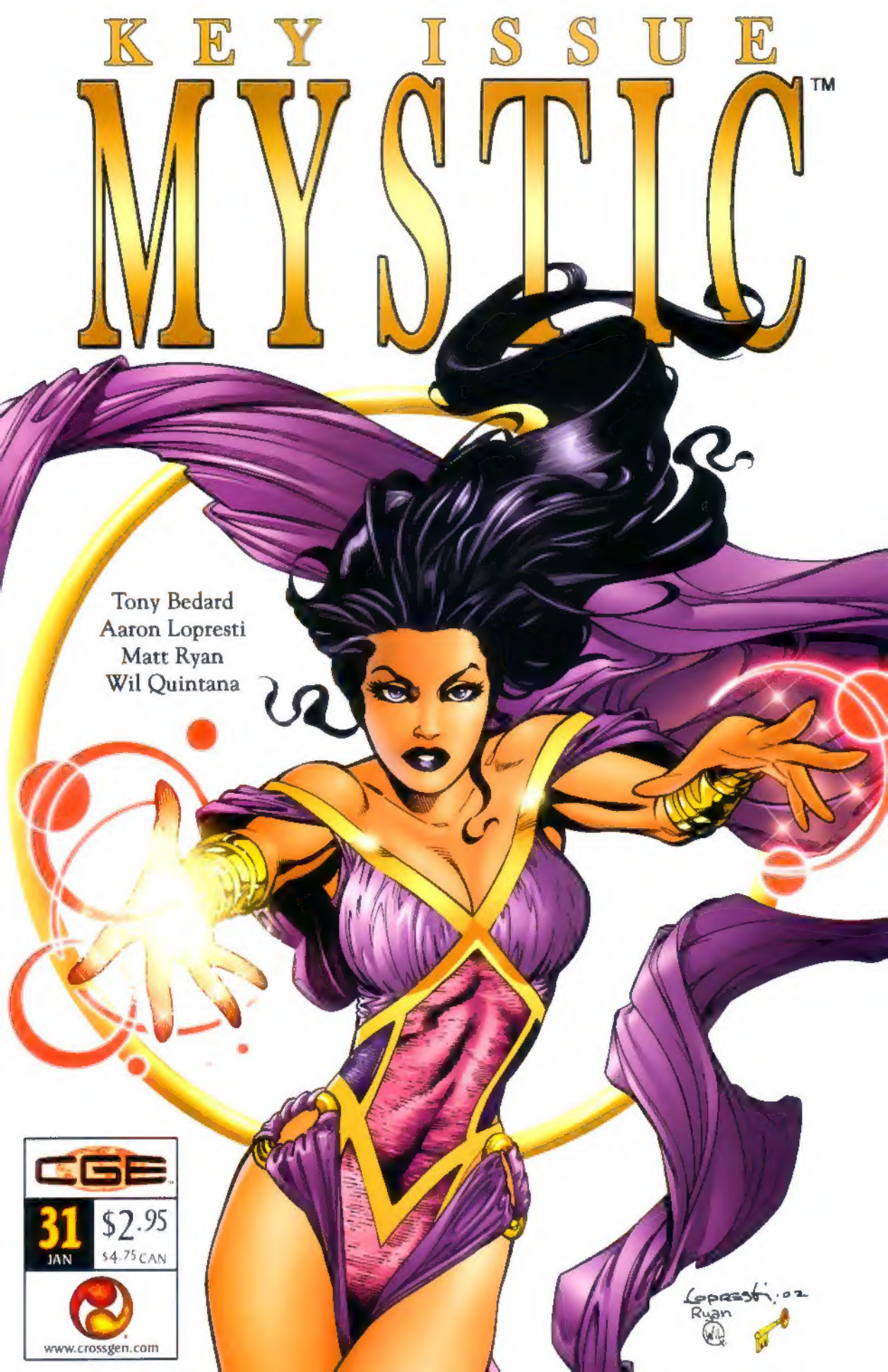
KEY ISSUE

MYSTIC™



Tony Bedard
Aaron Lopresti
Matt Ryan
Wil Quintana

CGE

31 JAN

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Giselle

never wanted ultimate power, but fate had other plans for her. Born on a world where society is ruled by seven magical Guilds, Giselle couldn't be bothered to learn much of the mystic arts. Instead, she partied away night after night while her older sister, Genevieve, rose through the ranks of the powerful Nouveau Guild.

At last there came the ceremony where Genevieve was to receive her Guild's Eternal Spirit – the ghost of a previous master who would share with her the arcane wisdom of the ages. In the audience, a mysterious stranger branded a mark of power onto Giselle's right palm. This red and yellow Sigil drew the eternal spirits out of all seven Guild Masters and bound them to Giselle.

Granted vast magical might, Giselle reluctantly became the most powerful Mystic ever known. With the help of her sister and her wisecracking pet, Skitter – who harbors a few secrets of his own – Giselle must overcome her own shortcomings even as she battles each new threat to her enchanted world.

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CGE

Uh-oh...

BROTHER MARCEAU! I NEED HELP!
ETIENNE--! IF WE LIVE THROUGH THIS, I'M GOING TO--
I KNOW... I KNOW...
HEY, um...WE DON'T HAVE TO TROUBLE THE GUILD MASTER WITH THIS LITTLE MISHAP...RIGHT?
TOO LATE! SHE'S ALREADY ON THE WAY!
BROTHER ETIENNE!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE THIS TIME?

MASTER VILLARD, I'M SO SORRY! I TRIED TO SUMMON A WILL-O-THE-WISP FROM THE SUBTLE PLANES, AND INSTEAD I GET THESE REVENANTS...
REVENANTS. GREAT.
DO YOU REALIZE HOW MUCH POWER IT'LL TAKE TO SEND THEM BACK?
FWASH
bother.
SKITTER?!
SKRAKT

SKITTER, HOW IN THE FOUR MOONS DID YOU--
We gotta talk, Genevieve. It's important--can we ditch the crowd?
...OKAY.
GUARDS, ESCORT BROTHER ETIENNE TO HIS QUARTERS.
YOU DON'T USUALLY TALK IN FRONT OF STRANGERS, MUCH LESS THROW AROUND THAT KIND OF POWER.
SOMETHING'S VERY WRONG... ISN'T IT?
Giselle's missing.
NOT AGAIN...! I'LL HAVE A SECURITY DETAIL SEARCH THE NIGHTCLUBS--
No. This isn't like before.
Before, I let her wander, stay out all night, whatever, because I knew there were things she needed to work out for herself.
YOU "LET" HER?
This time, I can't sense her anywhere. She's no longer on Ciress, or even up in her lunar sanctum...

"...Giselle has vanished without a trace."
mm STOP
...SKITTER, STOP IT...!
I SAID --
YOU'RE NOT SKITTER...!

GRROUWRR

SORRY, KITTY...
SNRRRRL
WHERE ON CIRESS AM I ?
DOWN, BOY... I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU...
...IF ONLY YOU FELT THE SAME...

RRRROOAARR!

HISS
RRRRRRRR
Um FELLAS..?
CHOMP
SEVEN SPIRITS!
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO KILL THE BIG KITTY DID YOU?
?
I MEAN, NOT TO SOUND UNAPPRECIATIVE, BUT I COULD'VE HANDLED HIM MYSELF A LITTLE SNARE SPELL, AND NOBODY HAD TO GET HURT

ANYWAY, COULD YOU TELL ME WHERE WE *ARE*? SEE, I WENT TO BED IN MY *APARTMENT* LAST NIGHT AND
OKAY, SORRY. FIRST THINGS FIRST. MY NAME'S *GISELLE VILLARD*. HOW DO YOU DO? YOU'RE THE FIRST ACTUAL *DRAGON* I'VE EVER MET.
SNIFF SNIFF
I'VE HEARD YOU'RE ALL SUPPOSED TO BE STICKLERS FOR *ETIQUETTE*, SO I HOPE YOU'LL CUT ME SOME SLACK IF I SEEMED *RUDE*, BUT ah
YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND* A THING I'M SAYING, *DO* YOU?
WHAT KIND OF DRAGON *ARE* YOU ANYWAY ?
RRRRRRRRRRRR-
RROOAARR!

SHOCK
CHOMP

YOU REALLY OUGHTTA THANK ME
ANYONE ELSE WOULD KILL YOU FOR BEING SO RUDE BUT

I DON'T WEAR FUR I DON'T EAT MEAT I DON'T HURT DUMB ANIMALS
WORST YOU'LL GET FROM ME IS A HANGOVER
COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY

ON THE OTHER HAND THE SON OF A WITCH WHO MADE SURE I WOKE UP HERE GETS A ONE WAY TICKET TO THE PLANE OF PAIN
AFTER HE PAYS MY BILL AT KONJURE-KLEEN!
AAA!

THERE
LONG AS I'M IN THE TROPICS, I MAY AS WELL DRESS TO IMPRESS
AGREE?
OH COME ON OUT - YOU'RE NOT FOOLING ANYONE
THANKS
NOW CAN ONE OF YOU POINT ME TO THE LOCAL GUILD TEMPLE - OR AT LEAST THE NEAREST CITY? I GOTTA CALL MY SISTER
WE HAVE TO TAKE HER TO THE SACHEM
UM, D'YA MIND SPEAKING CIRESSIAN, PLEASE? I'M NOT SO GOOD WITH DIALECTS

OH, NEVER MIND
HEY, SPIRITS, ARE YOU LISTENING? I COULD USE A LITTLE WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS RIGHT ABOUT NOW
ETERNAL SPIRITS ?
HELLO ?
WHY THE HELL AREN'T THEY ANSWERING ?
I KNOW FELLAS, I SOUND LIKE THERE'S A CRACK IN MY CAULDRON, BUT THERE'S A SIMPLE EXPLANATION
SEE, IT'S ALL GOT TO DO WITH THIS THING ON MY HAND
A FEW MONTHS AGO I WAS AT MY SISTER'S RITE OF ASCENSION WHICH WAS A PRETTY BIG DEAL, ALL THE GUILD MASTERS WERE THERE
ANYWAY SOME STRANGER SLIPPED THIS MAGIC SIGIL ONTO MY PALM WHEN I SHOOK HIS HAND
AND A MINUTE LATER, IT SUCKED THE SEVEN ETERNAL SPIRITS OUT OF THE GUILD MASTERS AND TRAPPED THEM IN ME
BELIEVE ME IF THIS WAS SOME KIND OF PRACTICAL JOKE, NOBODY WAS LAUGHING!

AND GET THIS: I STILL HAVE *NO IDEA* WHO THE CREEP WAS THAT PUT THIS THING *ON* ME!

HEY, YOU THINK THE *SAME GUY* MIGHT'VE LEFT ME *HERE*?

<WONDER IF SHE'S FIGURED OUT SHE'S OUR *PRISONER* YET?>

<I *HOPE* NOT!>

Oh, *C'MON!* YOU'VE GOTTA KNOW *SOME* CIRESSIAN! YOU LOOK KIND OF SHAMAN BUT THE ACCENT'S CLOSER TO DJINN

SO IS THIS THE SHAMAN RIFT VALLEY? OR MAYBE AN *ISLAND* IN THE DJINN ARCHIPELAGO

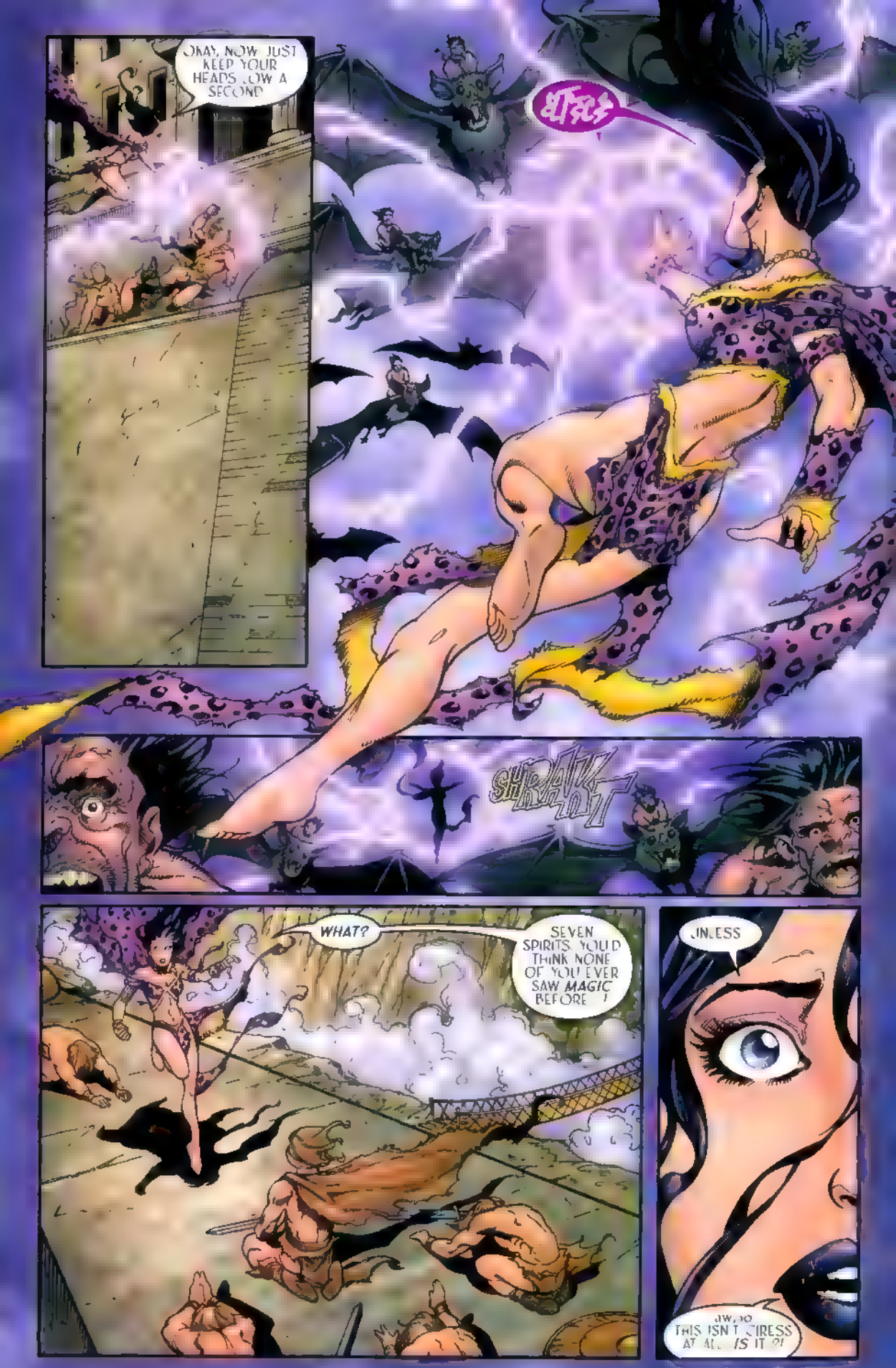
Oh

<THIS IS YOUR NEW HOME *VARDAN REE*>

Um! WHERE'S ALL THE *OTHER MOONS*?

WHOA! FRIENDS OF YOURS?
<MUD HUNTERS!>
OGG!
<HURRY! WE HAVE TO HELP THEM!>
WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?
NEVER HEARD OF A SHIELD SPELL, OR A
THAP
<OOF>
AEEEEE!
HHHHHHHHHH!

<FIGHT! DON'T LET THEM LAND!>
<DON'T LET THEM ESCAPE!>
-ah?!
WATCH YOUR STEP, HANDSOME--!
THAP
EEEEEYAAAAA!


OKAY, NOW JUST KEEP YOUR HEADS LOW A SECOND
SHRAKK
SHRAKK
WHAT?
SEVEN SPIRITS, YOU'D THINK NONE OF YOU EVER SAW MAGIC BEFORE!
UNLESS
AW, SO THIS ISN'T SIRESS AT ALL... IS IT?!

AN INVESTIGATION BY NOUVEAU SECURITY CONCLUDES THAT MY SISTER WAS LAST SEEN ENTERING HER APARTMENT BUILDING, AND NEVER CAME BACK OUT
SO EITHER SHE USED A TELEPORT SPELL, OR SUMMONED A GATE TO ANOTHER PLANE.
OR SOME OTHER PARTY TOOK HER FROM HER OWN HOME
AND CONSIDERING THAT GISELLE HAS SO MUCH POWER AT HER DISPOSAL THAT NOT EVEN THE DEMON QUEEN COULD DEFEAT HER .
YES. WHAT FORCE ON CIRESS COULD ABDUCT HER?
THE IMPLICATIONS ARE DARK INDEED, BUT EVEN MORE DISTURBING IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE ETERNAL SPIRITS OF OUR GUILDS ARE FOREVER LOST WITH HER
HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO COMPENSATE US FOR SUCH A LOSS?
TYPICAL.
MY SISTER IS MISSING AND YOU SEEK TO PROFIT FROM IT!
WORRY ABOUT YOUR OWN FUTURE, GENEVEVE VILLARD. YOUR FAMILY MAY WELL HAVE DESTROYED OUR WAY OF LIFE

RECRIMINATIONS CAN WAIT RIGHT NOW, I ASK YOU EACH TO CHECK WITH EVERY ALLY AND AGENT YOU HAVE ON THE SUBTLE PLANES FOR ANY SIGN OF GISELLE
HER SAFE RETURN IS IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US
Oh, FOR THE DAY WHEN THOSE TWO SISTERS ARE FOREVER EXORCISED FROM OUR LIVES
PATIENCE, MAGUS YOU'VE ALREADY PROVIDED US WITH THE KEY TO ELIMINATING THE MORE TROUBLESOME SISTER GENEVIEVE WILL FOLLOW SOON ENOUGH
SHE'D BETTER IT WOULD BE BAD FOR YOU NOT TO DELIVER ON YOUR PROMISES AFTER I SUCCEEDED IN BANISHING GISELLE
SPARE ME THE EMPTY THREATS, MAGUS YOU'VE BEEN A USEFUL PAWN, BUT A PAWN NEVERTHELESS
KEEP IN MIND THAT THERE IS A REASON I AM THE ONLY LIVING HUMAN YOU WOULD EVER CALL MASTER

STORYTELLERS

Tony Bedard WRITER

Aaron Lopresti PENCILER

Matt Ryan INKER

Wil Quintana COLORIST

Troy Peteri LETTERER

Mark Alessi
PUBLISHER & CEO

Gina M. Villa
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Michael A. Beattie
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Jennifer Hernandez
GENERAL COUNSEL

Tony Panaccio
VICE PRESIDENT
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Chris Oarr
VICE PRESIDENT
SALES & MARKETING

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Courtland Whited
MIS DIRECTOR

Gabo Mendoza
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Charles Decker
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PRODUCTION CONTROL

Brian M. Soltis
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Brandon Peterson
VICE PRESIDENT
SPECIAL PROJECTS

Barbara Kesel
HEAD WRITER

Bart Sears
ART DIRECTOR

Pam Davies
VICE PRESIDENT
PRODUCTION

Sylvia Bretz
PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR
ADVERTISING/WEB

Erin Flanagan
WEB DESIGNER

Janet Bechtle
PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR
BOOKS

Randy Martin
PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Michelle Pugliese
FREELANCE COORDINATOR

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MYSTIC™
Issue #32
In Stores
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Lopresti
Ryan
Queen of the Jungle

MYSSPELLINGS

Please let us know if you don't want your name and address printed. Mark your e-mails as "okay to print." Letters may be edited for content and length.

Dear MysSpellings,

I've been a fan of MYSTIC from the very beginning and haven't stopped enjoying it since. There are so few titles filled with the magic and mysticism that MYSTIC offers, and for that alone I'm grateful. Not to mention the great storyline, excellent artwork, and wonderful coloring that's become so standard for this book, which enhance this comic to a point beyond compare.

At any rate, I wasn't sure if you still accepted fan art, but I wanted to send it to you all regardless, as a token of my thanks. I truly appreciate the time and effort that's put into MYSTIC and I hope that the artwork shows my gratitude. Keep up the great work, because I'll never stop reading if you do.

Best Wishes,
Mikael Sebag
residentmage@hotmail.com

Mikael, thanks for taking the time to write and especially for all the effort that I know must have gone into the great piece you did of Giselle. It's been a long time since we've been able to print any fan art, which I regret, but there is a forum available online if you want to share your work with other fans. If you haven't been to our web site lately, you should give it a look. It's been revamped, and one of the threads on our message boards, called "Creative Critiques," is where you can post your work and get feedback from others; don't worry, people are usually tactful about it. Frequently, posters there get their work displayed on the sites of other posters, which many of them find pretty gratifying. Just a thought for you...

❖

Dear MysSpellings:

I've really enjoyed the last three issues of MYSTIC, starting off with Fabrizio Fiorentino's majestic artwork on MYSTIC #28. Standing ovation! The people on a flying whale type of creature, the man who walks on clouds (that reminded me of the old *Herbie* comic book), a black knight on a winged horse — I almost thought this was the fantasy artwork of Boris Vallejo! What a way to welcome the reader to Astral City!

The artwork in MYSTIC #30 is stunning! Al Rio is absolutely incredible! When I first saw *Lord of the Rings*, I was amazed at the special effects and the beauty of the scenes; the same thing happens with this issue! I was dazzled by the appearance of the cathedral castle majestically sitting upon a hill with air cars, air balloons and dragons flying in the skies above. The beauty of this and other scenes is breathtaking.

I really got a kick out of the human-dressing demon named Duke Abbadon, and what is with all of these weird bone machine guns? Those are the strangest-looking guns I have ever seen. The Jazzrat's nightclub is quite an interesting place and I hope that it will be explored further.

I love the way Tony Bedard gets this story. Tony does a fine job with the interactions of the main characters, like in #28 when Giselle Villard encounters Master Mondru of the Astral Guild. I also got a kick out of the office space that Detective Devereaux occupies, with all kinds of fantasy creatures zipping in and out. In one respect MYSTIC reminds me of *Harry Potter*, because you never know what to expect. In another way, it makes me think of the magic that the show *Xena: Warrior Princess* brought to our TV screens.

Sincerely yours,
Paul Dale Roberts
Elk Grove, CA

Yep, Tony gets it all right, Paul. Every issue seems to have another little bit of business that enriches Giselle's world. Thanks for your appreciation of Fabrizio and Al, and now what d'ya think of the great stuff Aaron's doing? We are so tickled to have him with us, and it goes without saying that Matt and Wil are the icing on the cake, art-wise.

❖

Greetings, Gina,

Firstly, farewell, Fabrizio Fiorentino. When Fabrizio started, I wasn't too fond of his art style. (Things seemed too dark and too unformed in places. I'm still not sure whether it was the inking or whether it was Fabrizio himself who was responsible for the dark tone of the book. Still, that's just my opinion.) However, recent issues have impressed me. The characters seem rounded, smoother, and the panels seem to flow better. Goodbye, Fabrizio, and good luck wherever you go.

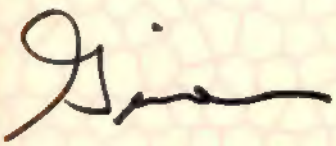
Storywise, Tony's coming up with some nice twists. In issue #29 Vashua is more of a complex character than I realized, and it's nice to see not all the Guild Masters are being won over by Giselle. Vashua's the first woman in this book unrelated to Giselle who is on a similar power level. Hopefully, these two can eventually become allies, if not friends.

As for the rest, Magus is plotting, Jean DuMont is in over his head, and a mysterious group is moving against Giselle. This could get very interesting, indeed...

Looking forward to more MYSTIC merriment.

John Koenigsbeck
j.koenig@blueyonder.co.uk

Thanks, John. Fabrizio isn't going any farther than SIGIL #34, for now, and if you liked what you saw here, you'll really like that! Keep your eyes peeled for the whole package in a few months.



via snail mail:
CrossGeneration Comics, Inc.
4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400
Oldsmar, Florida 34677

or via e-mail:
letters@crossgen.com
MYSTIC (in the subject line)

CROSSCURRENTS

by Gina Villa

Among the large number of things that are happening to make us proud here at Kool-Aid Central is one that deserves some special recognition. MERIDIAN trade paperbacks have been making people in the book trade sit up and take serious notice. As one of our first four books, all of which were launched in the same month, MERIDIAN has never seemed to get the credit it deserves. Now, though, some of the most prestigious professional publications in the field—like *Publishers Weekly*, *Voice of Youth Advocates*, *Library Journal* and *School Library Journal* have all given MERIDIAN stellar reviews! These mags are the real "top of the heap" of their kind. For instance: *Publishers Weekly* is the #1 trade magazine for publishers and booksellers in the U.S.; *Voice of Youth Advocates* is the only journal for Young Adult librarians and is the leading voice in promoting graphic novels in libraries, having the longest-running review column on GN's in the country; *Library Journal* is the longest continuously published trade journal in the U.S. and usually focuses on adult books, so getting recognition from them for a young adult book is huge!

Here's some of what they had to say about MERIDIAN:

"The visual style lies somewhere between anime and art deco, incorporating both exuberant action and static decoration, and it works beautifully. The characters are fascinating too..." "(MERIDIAN has) more moral weight than usual in a mass market comic..." "Beautiful art and strong scripting makes MERIDIAN a superior value."
Publishers Weekly

"Teen fans of fantasy and adventure stories will love MERIDIAN. Librarians should also introduce this series to those teens who like *Dune* and Andre Norton's science fiction adventures, as well as to manga readers who like *Sailor Moon*."
Voice of Youth Advocates

"Demetria is the most fully-realized of all CrossGen's invented worlds and Sephie herself is the publisher's most endearing character. Teens will identify with her, and adult comics fans will enjoy the story as well. Libraries should get the whole series."
Library Journal

"Sephie is a strong heroine, dedicated, sincere, and loyal... The dynamic, lush color art is equally adept at displaying emotion or action. ...a coming-of-age story on a richly imagined world with appealing characters. ...relevant to teens without being patronizing."
School Library Journal

Kudos to the fantastic creative team of MERIDIAN, Barbara Kesel, Steve McNiven, Tom Simmons, and Morry Hollowell, for this well-deserved praise!

CROSSGENERATION COMICS, INC. RECOMMENDED GOOD READ!

Recommended R Reads

by CrossGen writer Tony Bedard

Alias, published by Max Comics, by Brian Michael Bendis and Michael Gaydos

When I first heard of Marvel's plans to publish a "mature readers" line set in their superhero universe, I was as skeptical as the next guy. However, this series is the textbook example for how to do such a book and hit exactly the right note. *Alias* follows the life of Jessica Drew, a former costumed heroine who now runs a low-key detective agency. The jobs she takes on present her with the kind of complex moral dilemmas world-saving Avengers seldom face. One thing I love is how *normal* Jessica looks, which makes it easier to appreciate her inner beauty. Also, the Marvel heroes are only tangentially involved, just enough to contrast against and underscore Jessica's everyday type of heroism. Ultimately, she's more honestly noble than the icons she never quite lived up to. Keep in mind, this series is not for kids, but it's just the ticket for those of us old enough to realize that the true heroism has nothing to do with "superpowers."

ONE MAN STANDS AGAINST THE LEGIONS

BRATH Prequel

Written by Chuck Dixon , art by Andrea Di Vito & Brad Vancata, colors by Rob Schwager

The beginning of an epic tale of worlds in collision and an empire in decline. Brath Mac Garen is the warchief of a clan that rules the last free land in the known world. His forces are pitted against the numberless legions of a ruthless emperor who will stop at nothing to enslave them.

48 pages full color, on sale January 29.....$2.95

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